

Council on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER
19, 2013

10:00AM – 4:00PM

1 WEST WILSON, MADISON

MEETING CALLED BY	Billy Mauldin
PRESENT	Nicole Everson, Mary Jane Griffin, Tracy Haas, Deborah Herczog, Denise Johnson, Billy Mauldin, Steve Smart, Justin Vollmar
ODHH STAFF PRESENT	Nancy Harbison, Linda Huffer, Melani Kaplan, Carrie Molke
ABSENT	Gary Ebben, Alex Slappey
INTERPRETERS	Amber Mullet, Sara Miller
CAPTIONIST	Rose Coulthart

Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Billy Mauldin, Chair.

Agenda topics

COUNCIL MEMBERS INTRODUCTION & APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

DISCUSSION		
Introductions: The Council members and meeting attendees introduced themselves: Carrie Molke – new Director for the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (not able to attend full meeting) Nancy Harbison – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the northeastern region of Wisconsin		
Approval of Meeting Minutes.		
Justin Vollmar motioned that the May meeting minutes are approved with a change as discussed. Billy Mauldin seconded. Motion passed unanimously.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

ANNUAL ELECTION OF COUNCIL CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

DISCUSSION	
Vice-Chair: Steve Smart nominated Denise Johnson for Vice-Chair. Denise Johnson accepted the nomination. Denise Johnson was elected to Vice-Chair unanimously.	
Chair: Billy Mauldin nominated Justin Vollmar for Chair. Justin Vollmar accepted the nomination. Justin Vollmar was elected to the Chair unanimously.	

INTRODUCTION TO CARRIE MOLKE, NEW DIRECTOR FOR THE BUREAU OF AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCES (BADR)

DISCUSSION

ODHH is within the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR). The ODHH Director position, which formerly was responsible for both ODHH and the Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired (OBVI), will be split into two different Director positions – one for ODHH and one for OBVI. In her new role as the director for BADR, Carrie will be working to improve communication and collaboration amongst the various office under her purview.

SPECIAL GUEST PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION Juliette Sterkins (Audiologist, HLAA Hearing Loop Advocate)

Juliette Sterkins is here to talk about the benefits of hearing loops, how they work and how the Council can help increase the number of hearing loops in public facilities throughout Wisconsin.

Three out of every thousand children are born with a hearing impairment. About one and a half of those children need hearing aids. The majority of deaf children are now implanted with cochlear implants. One out of every ten people will experience hearing loss. One out of every three aging adults will experience hearing loss. 99% of people with hearing loss depend on speech and the spoken word to communicate. Hearing loss is associated with dementia, a greater likelihood of falling, greater hospitalization rates, greater numbers of nursing home use.

One out of every four people with a hearing loss uses a hearing aid. Some of the issues as to why they do not are that there isn't enough benefit, issues with comfort, reliability issues, stigma, reliability and cost. Audiologists and Hearing Care Providers need to do better testing – for example, testing comprehension levels of speech in noise. Consumers are also not informed about oral rehab classes, learning more about their hearing loss and telecoils. Consumers should also be made aware of high pitch versus low pitch hearing loss, the different types of hearing loss and how distance factors into how effectively sound can be heard by hearing aid users.

The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requires accommodations be provided for persons with a disability, including hearing loss. There are three different systems that allow people to hear over distance.

1. Infrared
2. FM Systems – typically requires a device with something to put around your neck (such as a loop that works with the Telecoil or headphones).
3. Loop – sends the sound from a microphone wirelessly to the Telecoil in the hearing aids or cochlear implants.

A Telecoil is required to work with the loop. It is a little copper wire in the hearing aid that functions as an antenna. Receiving sound this way helps to quiet background noise and allow for increased clarity of the sound. Many modern hearing aids have the ability to not only receive the signal using the Telecoil but also allow for some ambient noise. The "T" on the hearing aid switch or cochlear implant setting stands for Telecoil. The number of hearing aids with Telecoils is increasing over time. When the Telecoil in the hearing aid or cochlear implant is activated, a separate device to receive the signal is not needed. This is the convenience of a loop system and is considered to be widely preferred.

Loop systems are available all around the world, including Westminster Abbey in England, libraries, banks, airports, churches, taxi cabs, buses, waiting rooms, theaters, etc. Libraries can apply for grant monies to install loops in their buildings. Juliette urges more advocacy efforts to inform others, especially senior citizens, about the benefits of Telecoils and loop systems. She encourages advocating with theaters and art venues, and other professionals as well. Arizona passed a Telecoil law that says that anyone who purchases a hearing aid must be informed about the Telecoil feature and how it works. This is to protect the consumers from purchasing devices without Telecoils that limit their ability to access assistive listening devices (ALDs) as options.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

SPECIAL GUEST PRESENTATION

DISCUSSION	Nancy Harbison (ODHH Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the Northeastern Region of Wisconsin)
<p>Nancy Harbison is here to share with the Council her project on establishing a pilot program aimed at improving employability and employment of individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind.</p> <p>Nancy, working with ODHH Staff Interpreter Amber Mullett, is developing a proposal and plan for a one to three year pilot project in the northeastern region of Wisconsin creating two positions aimed at helping individuals find gainful employment in the competitive job market. One position would specialize in services for Deaf individuals and the other would specialize in services for Hard of Hearing individuals. The two positions would allow for the different needs, cultural and linguistic difference between the groups of consumers. Consumers would receive assistance in improving interviewing skills, application writing, applying online, and other related needs. Systematic barriers that face individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind continue to be a significant issue, regardless of whether they are DVR clients or not. The pilot project would work on collaborating with other agencies to fill the gaps in the system and build on what</p>	

those partners are able to provide. This project is still in development and Nancy is continuing her conversation with others in this field, working for other minority groups, members of the community about their personal experiences and frustrations, and other key stakeholders. Nancy may ask the Council for support for this project once it is set and ready to go.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION Linda Huffer

Special Announcement – Linda Huffer is retiring as Director of ODHH. Her last day will be October 18th. The Bureau Director, Carrie Molke, is currently looking to hire someone to replace Linda very shortly. There will be an interim director appointed until the replacement is hired. The interim director will be appointed by Carrie Molke and Linda is not privy to that process.

The state process for hiring for the Director's position includes a two week application timeframe. The job announcement was sent via the normal channels for state jobs. Applicants must take a written test that is scored and ranked. Those who achieve a specific score on the test will then go to the interview level. Linda is not privy to the ranking levels or the questions. The number of persons in the interview panel will be determined by Carrie Molke but they are usually kept to three or five (an odd number to prevent ties). The members of this panel will have to be at an Office Director level or higher. The panel will likely include someone with a disability, someone who is a minority and someone from outside the Department who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. This panel will usually pick the top two or three candidates who will go through another interview process – usually with Carrie Molke. Once a reference check is conducted on the top one or two candidates, the HR office becomes involved with the negotiation of the salary and the offer. In an effort to speed up the long process, the Department is trying to hold interviews in October. They will try to have the process completed before the November cutoff and hiring is frozen for the rest of the year. Linda is not a part of this hiring process at all.

Signs at the Zoo – This program took place at the Henry Vilas Zoo on Saturday, September 14th 10:00am – 2:00pm and was considered a phenomenal success. A large number of volunteers (70 people) came out to help run the event and the weather was beautiful. The event included a map of the different stations where people could go to learn the signs. They would learn different signs that correlated to the animals near that station. The event included storytelling, face painting and was great fun for children. There is already talk about doing the event again – possibly at a different location next year. An estimated 2,000 people attended this

event. Bonnie Eldred, from the Deaf Mentor Project, was instrumental in ensuring the success of this event.

Mental Health (presented by Melani Kaplan) – The mental health block grant that was funding the Mental Health & Substance Abuse Steering Committee was cut. No further funding will be available after September 30th. While the funding has not been significant, the committee has been able to do a lot with what they have. Regardless of the current loss of funding, they are pursuing other grant opportunities and will continue their work.

- The Committee has planned and will be hosting Information Sessions about Mental Health for members of the community in the Appleton, Milwaukee and Madison areas on September 20th and 21st. The RSVP numbers are very good for each of these locations and there is hope for successful events. Dr. John Gournaris, a Deaf psychologist from Minnesota will be the main speaker. A member of the Deaf Community will also speak about her experiences with mental illness and her process of recovery. These sessions will be videotaped and made available on the steering committee website at a later date.
- The committee is also developing a procedures manual for hearing mental health and substance abuse service providers to better work with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind consumers.
- The committee is working on a Standards of Care manual that addresses the rules and regulations regarding services and how they apply to providing appropriate services for consumers with a hearing loss.
- The committee is also partnering with Rogers InHealth on their video project aimed at reducing stigma. The committee has supported captioning their current videos and has helped find individuals with hearing loss to share their stories of living with mental illness and recovery. These videos will be posted on the Rogers InHealth website to which the steering committee will link to once their website is developed.
- The committee is working on developing a website that will share their work, provide resources for professionals and for the community.

ODHH Updates –

- Carolyn Small, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Northwest region, will be retiring by the end of this year.

FEMA Grant and Partnership with WAD –Tom Benziger, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in the Southeast region continues to work on this disaster preparedness project. More information will be shared at a later date.

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Inmates and the Department of Corrections – Bette Mentz-Powell is working with the Department of Corrections on a pilot program to install Video Phones (VPs) for Deaf inmates. This pilot project is moving ahead.

Hospital Toolkit – Shawnee Thomas, ODHH Deaf & Hard of Hearing Specialist in

the Northern region, is working on a toolkit for patients who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind in hospitals or nursing homes. Shawnee has been with the Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired, HLAA and other people for their input on this project.

Affordable Health Care Act – Jennifer Koehn, ODHH Deaf Disability Benefits Specialist, is learning about the Affordable Health Care Act and will be able to help members of the community to the right information and resources as needed.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
None		

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION	
Visor Card – The Wisconsin State Patrol has given its endorsement of the Visor Card. Possible next steps were discussed but tabled for the New Business part of the meeting.	
Legal Liaison Position – This is about the formation of a new position that would serve as an equal communication access liaison for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind and the legal system. The position would work with the courts and attorneys to ensure that equal access is provided from the beginning of any interactions with the courts all the way to ensuring that court-ordered actions are accessible as well. The subcommittee met to hone the finer points of the proposed idea. Possible next steps were discussed but tabled for the New Business part of the meeting.	
Council Website – Melani Kaplan submitted a draft of what a public comment section would look like on the Council website. Pros and cons of a public comment section, recruitment of community emails were discussed. Other ideas for the Council receiving feedback from their communities were discussed.	
Video Remote Interpreting – [Hiring entities and businesses are using Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) as a way to circumvent the state interpreter licensure. By using VRI interpreters from out of state, those interpreters may not meet the minimum standards set forth by state law. The Council was to write a letter to DSPS in support of the state law that interpreters providing VRI services meet the same licensure requirements or equivalent as those who are physically within the state of Wisconsin.] The letter was composed and sent. At the latest SLIC (Sign Language Interpreter Council) meeting, it was determined that VRI services must meet the licensure requirements. Upon the letter of the law, it doesn't matter whether the interpreter is physically present or whether they are on a VRI screen. If the interpreter is providing services in the state of Wisconsin, they must comply with our law.	
DSPS Website & Interpreter Licensure – This item was continued from last meeting. [The DSPS website that oversees the Interpreter Licensure is currently	

difficult to navigate and not deaf-friendly, per complaints from the community. The Council will compose a letter to DSPS asking that they make the interpreter licensure section of their website easier to access and more deaf friendly; and that the letter is shared with SLIC, WisRID, WAD and posted on the Council website for them to follow suit.] Billy will write the letter and submit to the Council for their feedback.

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) – (The Council will compose a letter thanking Jim for coming to the meeting and reiterating concerns about DVR services for consumers who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and cc the letter to John Howe and Mike Grecko. Nicole was to begin the initial composition of the letter and send to Council members for their feedback.) Nicole Everson is still in the process of writing the letter and gathering information for the response.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Council Website: Nicole Everson will draft some sample verbiage for the Council website and submit to the Council members for their feedback.	Nicole Everson	12/6
DSPS Website & Interpreter Licensure: Billy Mauldin will draft a letter to DSPS asking that the Interpreter Licensure page be easier for navigability and ASL friendly.	Billy Mauldin	12/6
DVR Letter: Nicole will draft a letter to DVR regarding concerns about services provided to people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind.	Nicole Everson	12/6

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION
Visor Card – Tracy Haas made a motion that the visor card is put on the Council website. Deborah Herczog seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Steve Smart moved that the visor card dissemination project be assigned to a taskforce. Nicole Everson seconded the motion. Point of Clarification by Deborah Herczog; the taskforce will be responsible for deciding how to print the card in a laminated form and how the copies will be distributed, in the meantime, members of the public could print their own copy from the Council website. The motion passed unanimously. Members of this taskforce will include Steve Smart, Tracy Haas, Justin Vollmar and Deborah Herczog.
Legal Liaison Position – Denise Johnson made a motion that the legal liaison position be assigned to a taskforce. Steve Smart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Members of this taskforce will include Denise Johnson, Steve Smart, Billy Mauldin, and Nicole Everson.
Video Remote Interpreters – Steve Smart made a motion that the Council draft a letter to the community informing them about the clarification of the Interpreter

Licensure Law and that VRI interpreters must have a Wisconsin license. Denise Johnson seconded the motion. Denise Johnson amended the motion as stated to include a component for an ASL V-log version of the letter. Nicole Everson seconded the amendment. Motion as amended passed unanimously. Justin Vollmar will write the letter.

Telecoil and Loop Education – Deborah Herczog made a motion that the Council draft a position statement supporting the education by audiologists and hearing aid dispensers to all of their hearing client recipients about Telecoils and Loop systems. Nicole Everson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Deborah Herczog will write the statement.

Council Communication Efficiency – Council members discussed pros and cons of conducting votes via email in between quarterly meetings. Council agendas from now on will include a Chair's Report during which the Chair will review the Council activities since the prior meeting.

Council Website – Denise Johnson made a motion that the Council open a public comment section on their website. Tracy Haas seconded the motion. Justin Vollmar made a motion to table the discussion of a public comment section on the website for the next Council meeting. Steve Smart seconded. The motion passed.

Hiring Process for New ODHH Director – Justin Vollmar moved that the Council compose a letter to Carrie Molke, Director of BADR, suggesting that that a community member from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind communities be involved in the interview panel for the new director of ODHH. Deborah Herczog has seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The letter will be written by Justin Vollmar.

ASL Vlogs on Council Website – Justin Vollmar made a motion that the Council begin posting ASL video announcements on the Council website. Steve Smart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Justin Vollmar will be creating the Vlog version of any of the written letters or statements put forth by the Council to be available for ASL users on the Council website. These Vlogs will be captioned.

Social Worker Licensure Board – Denise Johnson made a motion that the Council write a letter to the Social Work Board on behalf of a person who is deaf and struggling to get their application approved in a timely manner. There was no second so the motion was not discussed or passed.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Visor Card: The visor card will be added to the Council website and the taskforce will begin to address the question of moving forward with the visor card.	Melani Kaplan and Taskforce Committee Members	12/6
Legal Liaison Position: The taskforce will meet to determine next steps.	Taskforce Committee Members	12/6
VRI Letter: Write letter to community informing them about the Interpreter Licensure	Justin Vollmar	12/6

Law's jurisdiction over VRI interpreters providing services into Wisconsin.		
Telecoil and Loop Education – Write a position statement supporting the education by audiologists and hearing aid dispensers to all of their hearing client recipients about Telecoils and Loop systems.	Deborah Herczog	12/6
Hiring Process for New ODHH Director – Write a letter to Carrie Molke, Director of BADR, suggesting that that a community member from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind communities be involved in the interview panel for the new director of ODHH.	Justin Vollmar	ASAP

Next Meetings – 2013 meetings: December 6th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISCUSSION

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm by Justin Vollmar, Chair.